

# FAITH

## *Priest takes 'vision quest' on Colorado Trail*

As the Colorado Trail unfolded before him, Peter Munson concentrated on putting one foot in front of the other and listening to God the whole way.

Munson, priest at Saint Ambrose Episcopal Church, recently returned from completing 250 miles of the Colorado Trail. During his trip, he spent his time contemplating his faith, the crossroads of his life and the future of Saint Ambrose.

"It was something like a vision quest. I wanted to take some time with God and listen to what might be next for the church," he said. "Like a lot of people, I find spiritual connection through nature."

Munson timed the trip to coincide with his 10th year as Saint Ambrose's spiritual leader and his 20th year as an Episcopal priest.

"I see it as being open to a new start, even though I'm at the same church," he said.

Munson, who has been drawn to the outdoors for many years, said the Colorado Trail provided a way to challenge and inspire him both physically and spiritually.



**MEGAN QUINN**  
*Faith Columnist*

The 486-mile trail winds through seven national forests and eight major mountain ranges, topping out at an elevation of over 13,000 feet.

When brainstorming ways to mark his 10-year anniversary, Munson initially planned to walk across the country to raise money for a charity. After talking it over with his parish, however, he scaled back his idea.

"They said, 'Why not start with something smaller?'" he said.

His two 10-day trips along the Colorado Trail proved to be just the right size. Munson is no stranger to challenging hikes, yet he discovered that his too-heavy pack and big-time elevation gain made the trail a force to be reckoned with.

"This was the first time I

had done something of this magnitude," he said.

Yet Munson said the physical elements were minor inconveniences along his journey. As he walked and prayed, he felt a greater sense of spiritual direction and gratitude with each step, even when the going was rough.

Though he was alone on the trail, he knew his congregation back in Boulder was supporting him.

"It gave me a sense of needing to recommit to the journey. This is my goal and people are praying for me," he said.

Some Saint Ambrose members supported him in a different way, said parish administrator Kristy Weprin.

"For the first 10 days, he was on his own," Weprin said. "Then, members of the church joined him."

Munson said the trail allowed him to see the journey's small joys. He met fascinating people who lent a helping hand or shared their stories.

Hikers often talk about the concept of "trail magic," or the idea that the things hikers

need most will come to them along the trail. In some cases, it comes as a gift of food from nearby residents or a friendly ear from a fellow hiker.

"In a theological sense, trail magic is the same as the idea of grace. Those are the unexpected blessings when you are open and paying attention," he said.

Weprin said Munson's journey has been uplifting for the congregation.

"We are really excited about this," she said. "There were many spiritual and practical lessons learned."

For many, the Colorado Trail is a once-in-a-lifetime trip. Each year, the Colorado Trail Foundation estimates thousands of visitors hike and bike sections of the trail, which spans between Denver and Durango. Of those, about 150 hike the entire route start to finish.

Munson plans to return to the trail next summer in order to complete the other half of the route.

"It's an exercise in listening," he said.

*Email:*  
[meganquin@gmail.com](mailto:meganquin@gmail.com)